

Thorns 'n Roses

From community submissions



Roses to:

Paul at the Patch Barracks Power-Zone. I was dreading my attempt to return a broken CD/DVD player, but when I finally did, Paul was cheerful, fast, efficient and – most impressive – he didn't act like he was being forced to hand over his own money. More customer service representatives need to emulate this young man.

The anonymous young lady on Kelley Barracks who returned my driver's license Oct. 1. I did not even realize I had dropped it until she so thoughtfully brought it to my office. With identification being so important for installation access and force protection, this effort was especially appreciated.

Thorns to:

Whoever is responsible for the movie rental wall in the Robinson Barracks CX. There is neither rhyme nor reason to the manner in which the movies are "organized."

It is quite annoying to have to look at every box on the shelves to find the film I'm looking for.

The Patch Ski Club, for its role in the placement of overbearing billboards in front of each Stuttgart installation that advertised free beer tokens available to U.S. military personnel for the Canstatter Volksfest.

In addition to being an eyesore, these billboards were in extremely bad taste.

E-mail comments to citizen@6asg.army.mil or fax them to 421-2570/civ. 0711-729-2570.

THE CITIZEN

Col. Gwendolyn Bonéy-Harris
6th Area Support Group Commander

Public Affairs Officer
Jennifer Sanders
pao@6asg.army.mil

Editor
Hugh C. McBride
citizen@6asg.army.mil

Reporters
Melanie Casey
caseym@6asg.army.mil
Mildred Green
greenm@6asg.army.mil
Maria Higgins
higginsm@6asg.army.mil
Terri Alejandro
alejandrot@6asg.army.mil

Stuttgart Essentials
Christie Lawler
lawlerc@6asg.army.mil

Contact Information

Office Location: Building 3307-W, Kelley Barracks
U.S. Army Address: Unit 30401, APO AE 09107
German Address: Gebäude 3307-W, Kelley Barracks,
Plieningerstrasse, 70567 Stuttgart
Telephone: 421-2046/civ. 0711-729-2046
Fax: 421-2570/civ. 0711-729-2570

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www.stuttgart.army.mil

Real men wear pink

By Hugh C. McBride
Commentary

The following is an open letter to red-blooded American men everywhere.

Dear fellow studs:
I think I can safely speak for us all when I state (loudly, I might add) that for 11 months out of the year, the only time any of us are likely to agree to the suggestion that we should "put on some pink" is if we're standing next to a turntable and talking about "Dark Side of the Moon."

But when the footballs start flying and World Series time draws near, it's time for us to start accentuating the ol' earth tones with that most feminine of floral hues.

Since 1985, October has been National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in the United States. And since 1991 the most prevalent symbol of this annual 31-day observance has been the pink ribbon.

You can relax, though – the purpose of the screed isn't to prod anyone into pinning a lil' something pink onto his battle dress uniform. Rather, it's meant to remind us why no man can afford to sit this fight out.

The textbooks say we're the logical ones, so here are a few cold, hard facts from the fine folks at the American Cancer Society to appeal to the left side of all those manly brains out there:

- Breast cancer is the second most common type of cancer among women in the United States.

- More than 230,000 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed annually in the United States, and more than 42,000 women die from the disease each year.

- A woman living in the United States today has a one-in-eight (12.5 percent) lifetime risk of developing breast cancer.

Some of the more mathematically adept of you may be able to turn that last statistic around into an optimistic seven-in-eight chance of *not* developing cancer.

This is an entirely valid interpretation of the facts, but lest you get too carried away with your newly discovered 88.5 "safety rate," do one thing for me:

Think of eight women who mean something to you (relatives included). Now pick the one who gets breast cancer.

I realize that some of you may have had a difficult time with that "eight people I care about" challenge, so here's a special statistic dedicated to all those whose sensitivity extends no further than their own skin:

- Each year in the United States, about 1,500 *men* are diagnosed with breast cancer and 400 die from the disease.

Calling breast cancer a women's issue is like claiming that 9/11 was a New York problem.

Now, I know that the statistical likelihood of any man who reads this developing breast cancer is just about zero. But not by a long shot does that mean that we're not affected by this disease.

The victims of breast cancer – and those who live their lives under the shadow of this scourge – are our mothers and grandmothers, wives and girlfriends, daughters and nieces and daughters-in-law.

(And in case you haven't noticed, they're also our supervisors and subordinates, coworkers, colleagues and friends.)

Women are not only the people who gave us life, but also the ones who make that life much more meaningful (or, at the very least, a heck of a lot more interesting).

And over the course of the average decade, more than two million of them – our life partners, our best friends, our worthy adversaries – will face the fight of their lives. In that same time period, more than 400,000 will lose that battle.

In other words, calling breast cancer a women's issue is like claiming that 9/11 was a New York problem.

So, how can you help? Glad you asked. Here are three easy ways to get started:

- **Educate yourself.** Contact the Stuttgart Wellness Center, attend one of the two Stuttgart-area breast cancer awareness events this month (see page 11 for details) or type "breast cancer" into Google and follow the links to enlightenment.

- **Show your love.** Next time you're buying a bouquet for Mother's Day or your anniversary (which you always remember to do, right?), stick a little note with a pink ribbon on it among the blossoms, reminding the recipient that one way to ensure years and years of additional loving gestures is to make mammograms part of her regular health maintenance plan.

- **Spread the wealth.** No war can be won on the cheap. To help relegate breast cancer to the history books, donate to the American Cancer Society or one of the many other organizations that are funding this fight.

Oh, and one final thought. If none of the appeals to altruism enumerated above has moved you, consider this: Helping to wipe out breast cancer will go a long way toward ensuring that your special someone will still be there to hold your hand when prostate exam time rolls around.

What it means to love a Soldier

By Jamie Reese
Commentary

She stands in line at the post office waiting to send a package to her husband, a U.S. Army Soldier serving in Kuwait. Envelopes, stamps, sunscreen, eye drops, gum, batteries, powdered Gatorade, baby wipes and Twizzlers.

He said he needed the sunscreen and baby wipes. She threw in the Twizzlers.

There's a bond at the post office in this military town. People aren't just sending letters and packages; they are sending smiles, hope, love and a touch of home.

When the national anthem plays in a military town, a special aura fills the air. Men, women and even children stop to pay their respects.

Civilians place their hands over their hearts. Soldiers salute. In this world, the anthem isn't just a prequel to the echo of "Play Ball."

She remembers what it was like before he left. She relives the moments before she kissed him goodbye.

A phone ringing at 0400 hours is enough to make her heart end up in her throat. She waits to hear the words,

"Don't worry, it's just a practice run." But instead she hears, "Here we go."

So, off he goes to pack, though most of the packing is finished because as a Soldier, he is "always ready to roll." She gets the baby, but leaves his pajamas on because it is just as well that he sleeps. She takes the dogs out, she gets dressed, all the while trying to catch glimpses of her husband. She wants to cherish his presence because she doesn't know when she'll see him again.

Within 15 minutes, the family is in the car heading to the "rally point." Too soon, with his gear over his shoulder, he walks away. She is left behind, straining to keep an eye on her Soldier.

She takes one last look and takes a deep breath. She reminds herself she must stay strong. No tears. Or, as few tears as possible.

She mentally prepares for the days, weeks, even months ahead. Her main priorities will be care packages, phone calls, e-mails, and letters sprayed with perfume.

And, she can't forget to turn the stamp upside down to say, "I love you."

Taking care of her family, her friends, even strangers – this is her mission as

an Army wife. At the ripe old age of 22, she knows the younger wives will turn to her for advice.

Alone at night, she runs the next day's events over in her mind to make sure they will all get finished. She reviews her checklist of things to do, things to buy for his care package.

Once again, she checks the calendar to count down the days. Before turning in, she checks to make sure the ringer is on for the late-night phone call that might come in from overseas.

Before she falls asleep, a few tears hit the pillow. But even as the tears escape, strength enters her mind, body, spirit and soul.

She remembers why she is here. She remembers the pride and the love that brought her here in the first place, and a sense of peace comes over her, replacing, if only for a second, the loneliness, the fear and the lingering heartache she feels while her soul mate is away.

This is what it means to love a Soldier. She wouldn't have it any other way.

The full text of this commentary is available online at www.defenselink.mil.